

RELATIONSHIP: THE BEST GIFT

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class, Kyle, walking home from school.

It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, 'Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd.'

Because I had a packed weekend planned with parties and a football game with my friends, I simply shrugged my shoulders and continued on home.

As I walked, I saw a group of kids running toward Kyle. Tripping him, all his books fell to the ground and his glasses landed in the grass about ten feet away. As he looked up, I saw a terrible sadness in his eyes and my heart went out to him.

I jogged over to him as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye. Handing him his glasses, I said, 'Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives.' He looked up with a big smile and said, 'Hey, thanks.' His smile was so genuine, showing real gratitude.

I helped pick up his books, and asked where he lived. Surprisingly, he lived near me. I asked him why I had never seen him around. He said he had gone to private school. Honestly, I would have never hung out with a kid who went to a private school!

We talked all the way home, and I helped him carry all those books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play a little football with my friends and he said yes.

We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same of him.

On Monday morning there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, 'Boy, you are going to build some serious muscles with this pile of books every day!' He laughed and handed me half the books.

Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor and I was going for business on a football scholarship.

Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation and I was so glad I did not have to speak.

On graduation day, I saw Kyle and he looked great. He was one of those guys that found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses! He had more dates than I had and all the girls loved him. Sometimes I was jealous!

I could see that he was nervous about his speech, so, I smacked him on the back and said, 'Hey, big guy, you will be great!' He looked at me with one of those really grateful looks and smiled. 'Thanks,' he said. As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began 'Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach...but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them.'

He continued, 'I am going to tell you a story.' As I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. 'Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable.'

I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile.

Not until that moment did I realize the depth of my actions that day in my freshman year when I went over to help a kid who was being bullied pick up his books.

Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life. For better or for worse. God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way. Look for God in others.

Note: This story is adapted from the original written by John W. Schlatter and published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR THE COMMUNITY

Graham Cooke has said to us, "What if the only thing missing in our nation is the Goodness of God?" And, "What if we can make Goodness fashionable by being kind to all we meet?" This Fireside Chat will have a practical application for the Community and a practical application for the Aglow group.

1. Take a few minutes and discuss potential problems in your community and make a list.
2. Take the problem list and ask God to give you creative ideas on how to turn the problems into possibilities that will take negative situations and turn them into places that release life to people.
3. Thinking of the skill sets of those in the Lighthouse, the passions, etc. attach each person to one of the possibility lists and break into groups according to possibilities that are waiting for your Lighthouse to come on the scene.
4. Brainstorm how you can begin to be the help God has sent into your community and become His visual aid of Goodness in your community.
5. Now, set a date to start at least ONE of the possibilities on the possibility list.

EXAMPLES:

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Possibilities</u>	<u>Date to Start</u>
Homeless population	Warm clothes, blankets, sandwiches	Before winter
Unsupervised kids in the park	Snacks, water, help with homework	During school
Retirement homes	Visits on Mondays, small gifts on B'day	Next month

PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR AGLOW GROUP

In Graham Cooke's Sunday morning message in Richmond, VA, he said, **"Our intentionality to partner with our promises must match His intentionality for us to become who those promises say that we are."**

That is why I keep files on all my friends, because I know all their prophetic words. I know their identity statement. I read through their prophetic words because they are my friends. When I feel there is a part of a word here that is about to come to pass, I will call up and say, "Let us go for a coffee. I want to talk about it. I think this is becoming a "now" word." When it was spoken, it was as future word, but every future word has to become a now word at some point.

When I am looking and saying, "I think this is a now word, what do you think?" "I think you could be right." "So what are your intentions towards it? What needs to change? What adjustments need to be made? What must change in your thinking? How does your lens take on a whole different viewpoint? What language needs to come out of your mouth in prayer, in declaration, in confession, in proclamation? How are you going to walk now that you have this word? It is crying out for release right now." That is what good friends do for one another, right?

We must KNOW who we are laboring with. No one in our Aglow group can be a 'Kyle'. Everyone is important. Everyone has a part to play. When you know each other as they are known in Heaven, you will begin to see who the people are to carry out the assignments God is giving to your group.

1. If your group has not written identity statements, do this together. Take the time for each person to prepare an identity statement. See the handout "How to Prepare a Personal Identity Statement" which can be found under the resource section of the Aglow website or in the back of the GameChanger manual.
2. If your group has not gone through GameChangers, make the commitment to go through it together NOW. Time is short and in Aglow, we are a people who are being prepared to be the help God has sent in the end times. Each person MUST know how they are known in Heaven. Each person must come out from under the influence of the old man and begin to live fully out of our new life in Christ. Old things MUST pass away and ALL THINGS must become new so that we present a right picture of Heaven on earth.

3. Now that your group has written identity statements, look for similarities that are shared and make groupings of people. Who has the gift of hospitality? Who has a strong teaching gift? Who likes to bake? Who has a passion for evangelism? Etc.
4. Every person in your group has a role to fulfill as God releases assignments for your community. Know those who are on your team which is made up from those attending your group.
5. Now you are ready to go to the first application and reach out into your community through the assignment(s) God is given into your hands to do. Be His Visual Aid!